

Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest Plan Revision Public Information & Scoping Meeting
August 6, 2011
9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Wenatchee Convention Center, 201 North Wenatchee Avenue, Wenatchee, WA

Meeting Purpose and Overview

The USDA Forest Service (Forest Service) hosted a public information and scoping meeting for the Colville and Okanogan National Forest Plan in Wenatchee, Washington on August 6, 2011. The meeting provided a combination of formats, including open house, presentation, question and response, and group comments.

The meeting served two purposes: to provide the public an opportunity to learn about the Forest Service's proposals for long-term management of the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests, and to provide information on how the public can comment on the proposals, how their comments will be used, and to learn about future opportunities for their involvement.

Meeting Agenda

Deborah Kelly, Plan Revision Public Affairs Specialist, welcomed everyone and explained the meeting objectives, agenda, and meeting conduct. Becki Heath, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Supervisor, talked briefly about the Forest Plan Revision process, the value of public participation in the process, and Forest Service expectations for the meeting. Becki introduced the rest of the Forest Service's Forest Plan Revision team (Team).

Presentation

Margaret Hartzell, Team leader, presented the key concepts of the Proposed Actions. She also explained that the comment period was extended an additional 30 days until September 28. Since this meeting was held in Wenatchee, Margaret focused on the specific proposals related to the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. She provided a general overview; a process timeline; and *new* and *continued* goals of the Proposed Actions for the following categories:

- Aquatics and riparian systems
- Plants
- Vegetation
- Wildlife habitat
- Access
- Livestock grazing
- Recreation
- Renewable forest products

- Scenery
- Preliminary Wilderness recommendations

Margaret also explained the “tools” the plan uses, as well as how comments are being gathered and used in the process. Please see Attachment 2 for the presentation slides.

Margaret also explained the difference between the Plan Revision project and Travel Management.

Questions & Answers (Q&A)

The following is a synopsis of questions (Q) / comments (C) and corresponding responses (R) from the meeting. Note: similar questions / concerns were combined for summarization purposes. Please see Attachment 3 for the transcribed flip chart notes.

Q: With the depressed economy, where will revenue come from to build and maintain trails?

R: The Forest Service receives funding from Congressional allocations. There is national direction to do Forest Plan Revision as though the budget will be stable. We also get a lot of work done with grant monies and with partnerships and volunteers. Our recreation fee program returns revenue directly to the Forest to accomplish recreation work such as trail maintenance. However, if funding is reduced beyond our capacity to do work such as trail maintenance, we will need to adjust.

We do a lot of work with partners and volunteers, and their support adds to our ability to compete for various types of grant funding to support trails and other projects.

Q: Most areas have firewood cutting restrictions. Will there be direction in the Forest Plan to open up more areas?

R: The revised forest plan won't set direction for where you can get wood. Those decisions will be at the District level. We will continue to have general direction similar to the existing forest plans for firewood cutting.

Q: There are currently separate plans for Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests. Will these continue to be separate plans in the revision?

R: When we are done with the revision there will be one plan for the Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. and one plan for Colville.

C: Will the proposed action be the preferred alternative in the Draft EIS?

R: The proposed action was prepared using the NEPA process. Through scoping we identify from public comments where the concerns are. This process will continue through the public comment period for the proposed action. Those comments will be translated into a range of alternatives to choose from in the next steps of the NEPA process. When the draft EIS is released, we will define the preferred alternative, which doesn't necessarily have to be the proposed action. The proposed action serves as a starting point in communicating with the public.

C/Q: There is a lack of intent to manage winter travel and winter recreation. Will there be more clarification in the revised forest plan?

R: Under the existing forest plans, the three forests approach winter recreation differently. When we started forest plan revision, we saw winter recreation as a need for change, but the concern was that this was a big project that would require a separate analysis.

Q: Is there a connection between logging operations and funding?

R: Generally not, but we do have stewardship contracting, which involves goods for services types of contracts where a closer tie can be identified.

Q: What kinds of things do you consider in making boundary improvements for those areas you're recommending for wilderness?

R: When we are considering whether an area should be recommended for wilderness we are looking at whether a forest needs that additional wilderness. We look at our Forest Directives that define the criteria (Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 70). . We also have an opportunity to manage some areas adjacent to designated wilderness. There are trails that cross in and out of wilderness where we have the opportunity to include those trails in wilderness. Designated wilderness boundaries are sometimes on a mid-slope. We also have the opportunity to adjust those boundaries to a clear feature, like ridge tops, rivers.

Q: The existing forest plan acknowledges land exchanges, but I don't see it mentioned in the proposed action.

R: We chose topics for the proposed action that previous public involvement showed was important. The revised forest plan will include direction on land exchanges.

Deborah explained format of the small group discussions and the remaining agenda. Each of the discussion group leaders gave a brief explanation of what the topics would be for the discussions. (Please refer to attachment 3 of these notes for a record of public comments/questions captured on flip chart notes during the breakout sessions).

Closing

Becki noted that the formal presentation and question-answer session had ended, and that Forest Service staff would be available for further discussion and to answer any remaining questions.

Margaret and Becki thanked everyone for their participation in the process, noting that their input will be helpful in developing plans in the future. They also encouraged everyone to submit written comments.

The open house reconvened for another 30 minutes. The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Attachment 1: List of Forest Service Staff

| Forest Service Staff | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Name | Forest | City, State |
| Mick Mueller | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Leavenworth, WA |
| Clint Kyle | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Wenatchee, WA |
| Andrea Lyons | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Wenatchee, WA |
| Margaret Hartzell | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Okanogan, WA |
| Debbie Kelly | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Okanogan, WA |
| Mark Loewen | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Wenatchee, WA |
| Shannon O'Brien | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Okanogan, WA |
| Jeff Rivera | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Leavenworth, WA |
| Bob Sheehan | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Wenatchee, WA |
| Emily Johnson | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Wenatchee, WA |
| Lisa Therrell | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Leavenworth, WA |
| Becki Heath | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Wenatchee, WA |
| Robin DeMario | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Leavenworth, WA |
| Susan Peterson | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Wenatchee, WA |
| Rod Clausnitzer | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Okanogan, WA |
| Barbara Fish | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Wenatchee, WA |
| Ann Fink | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Leavenworth, WA |
| Janet Flanagan | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Entiat, WA |
| Paul Willard | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Leavenworth, WA |
| Jennifer Zbyszewski | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Winthrop, WA |
| Roland Giller | Okanogan-Wenatchee | Wenatchee, WA |

Attachment 2: Presentation Slides

WELCOME!

COLVILLE AND OKANOGAN-WENATCHEE NATIONAL FOREST PLAN REVISION

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND SCOPING MEETING

August 6, 2011 Wenatchee, Washington

Meeting Principles

- Listen actively
- Participate actively
- Discuss concerns in a constructive and civil manner
- Share question and response time
- Please hold applause
- Turn off/mute electronic devices
- Let the Forest Service Staff know if you need help finding something, or someone to talk with you.
- The FS will genuinely try to answer, as specifically as possible, any questions about the proposed actions and how they may affect your interest(s) on the Colville or Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests.

NEWZ Plan Revision

Why you should be involved

- Forest Plan Revision – Proposed Action public involvement
- June 30 to September 28, 2011

"Sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forest and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."
- Forest Service Mission

NEWZ Plan Revision

Plan Revision – the basics

- Managing expectations
- Bring current plan up-to-date as required by NFMA
- Cannot make changes to laws, regulations, the directives, policy



Umbrella
Operating framework for Forest

NEWZ Plan Revision

Agenda

- 9:00 a.m. Open House
- 9:30 a.m. Welcome and Meeting Overview
- 9:40 a.m. Informational Presentation, Questions and Concerns
- 10:30 a.m. Discussion Groups
- 12:00 p.m. Open House
- 12:30 p.m. Adjourn

NEWZ Plan Revision

Informational Presentation

Margaret Hartzell,
Forest Plan Revision Team Leader

NEWZ Plan Revision

What Plans Do...

- Describes desired
 - Habitat for wildlife, aquatic species, and plants
 - Vegetation (trees, shrubs, range lands)
- Identifies areas suited for kinds of travel
 - on foot, motorized, or mechanized
- Recommend wilderness, determine eligibility of wild and scenic rivers
- Provide sideboards for projects
 - standards and guidelines

NEWZ Plan Revision

Time Line

- This summer – Proposed Action
- Summer 2012 – DEIS
- Summer 2013 – FEIS
- Fall 2013 – revised forest plan



NEWZ Plan Revision

Attachment 2: Presentation Slides

Proposed Action

- Aquatics and Riparian Systems
 - New – Key watersheds
 - Continuing – good water quality, riparian buffers, healthy riparian ecosystems



NEWZ Plan Revision

Proposed Action

- Plants
 - Continue – preventing introduction and spread of invasive plants
 - Using native plants
 - Protecting unique habitats, rare plants, ESA species
 - Have healthy ecosystems



NEWZ Plan Revision

Proposed Action

- Vegetation
 - New – role of disturbance in ecosystem; data on composition, structure, and spatial patterns
 - Continue – focus on ecosystem restoration and forest health, managing wildfire risks, contributing habitat



NEWZ Plan Revision

Proposed Action

- Wildlife Habitat
 - New – science to better describe habitat condition; ESA species
 - Continue – high quality habitat, connectivity, and contributing to recovery of ESA species



NEWZ Plan Revision

Proposed Action

- Access – roads and trails, docks and bridges
 - Continue – safe, affordable, environmentally sound system of roads and trails
 - Continue – range of recreational trails
 - NOTE on the Travel Management process



NEWZ Plan Revision

Proposed Action

- Livestock Grazing
 - Continue – range lands in good condition.



NEWZ Plan Revision

Proposed Action

- Recreation
 - New – additional data on recreation trends and use specific to Forest
 - Continue – offer quality, nature-based recreation in outdoor setting



NEWZ Plan Revision

Proposed Action

- Renewable Forest Products
 - Special forest products, merchantable wood products
 - Continue – provide firewood, saw timber, biomass, wood fiber
 - Average 48-52 mmbf and 10,000 acres per year on average in timber outputs



NEWZ Plan Revision

Attachment 2: Presentation Slides

Proposed Action

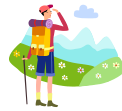
- Scenery
 - New – system that emphasizes actively managing to enhance and maintain
 - Continue – provide beautiful scenery



NEWZ Plan Revision

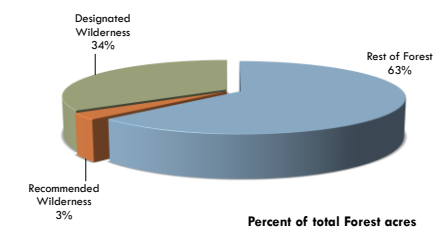
Proposed Action

- Preliminary Wilderness Recommendation
 - Continue – Designated Wilderness – 1,470,000 acres
 - New – preliminary recommendation of 125,800 acres
 - Not final decision, existing uses can continue until Congress acts
 - Did not recommend areas with motorized trails, mining operations, WUI with dry Forest, tools needed, not high quality



NEWZ Plan Revision

Proposed Action



NEWZ Plan Revision

Proposed Action

- Tool the plan uses - Management Areas
 - Consistent with neighbors
 - Habitats move
 - New congressionally created trail – Pacific Northwest National Scenic



NEWZ Plan Revision

Commenting

- Today – gather information, ask questions
- Tomorrow - Send us comments specific to the proposed action, on-target, thoughtful
- Use comments to build options (alternatives) for plan



NEWZ Plan Revision

How to Comment

- **Send comments to:**
Forest Plan Revision
Okanogan Valley Office
1240 Second Avenue South
Okanogan, WA 98840
- Email: r6_ewzplanrevision@fs.fed.us
- Website: www.fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/plan-revision

Comments are most helpful if received by September 28, 2011.

NEWZ Plan Revision

Discussion Groups

To enable focused discussion on specific topics of interest.

- Three 20-minutes discussion sessions
- Four discussion topics (choose up to 3 of these):
- Join wherever there is an empty chair
- Please visit each group only once
- Flip chart notes will capture the nature of questions and comments -- NOT a substitute for your written comments.

NEWZ Plan Revision

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Attachment 3: Flip Chart Notes

Concerns noted on Flip Charts during Question/Response Period

Recreation Access

- Will the Forest Plan restrict any more motorized snow recreation? Particularly in the Teanaway and Manastash areas?
- What will you manage for in road density?
- I am less concerned about roads than access, particularly interested in maintaining motorized snow access.
- Is there a place we can snowmobile now but won't be able to in the proposed action?
- Is there land not being considered for wilderness but is being considered to further restrict access?
- Is it being proposed to close the road at Holden that goes to the wilderness to motorized access?
- Wilderness boundary signage needs to be improved for winter use (ex., Van Epps).
- Moving boundary lines should always add to wilderness instead of taking from wilderness. Increase wilderness not decrease.
- Please be careful with your studies as Congress takes these into consideration when deciding upon wilderness additions/changes.
- What effect would 1581 have on this process?
- I like the idea of backcountry. That's like wilderness without the same restrictions as wilderness.
- Converting roads to trails is worth considering as a way to achieve road density.
- Maintain roads that access trailheads.
- I recommend 500 to 1000 foot setbacks for wilderness boundaries for roads.
- If roads need to be moved from riparian areas, they need to have some place to be moved to. Don't restrict the surrounding area to the point that the road can't be moved.

Attachment 3: Flip Chart Notes

- Need more control for snowmobiles and where they can go and where other types of winter recreation is appropriate.
- I am concerned about noise pollution.
- Need to identify areas where summer motorized use is not authorized.

Aquatics and Wildlife

- Is designated habitat in the revised forest plan more global?
- Is the endangered species act incorporated into the plan?
- How will spotted owl habitat be defined and managed?
- Will there be an overlap of habitats for different species?
- With designation of lynx, how will fire management be done? How do you move forward with fire management and fire management plans? Stands on Slide Ridge for instance. Type 1 teams may not recognize those management areas.
- Will LSRs be eliminated in the revised forest plan? How will they be re-allocated?
- Will there be any restrictions of summer use of ski areas?
- I need clarification of partnership between the WDFS and Forest Service.
- How will you manage for wildlife with climate change? There is concern about wildlife migration, protection of wildlife corridors and concern over closures.
- Will there be management direction to close roads and/or trails to motorized access for wildlife?
- Need to manage for fuel leaking from 2 stroke motors.

Recommended Wilderness

- How will recommended wilderness areas be managed? I have a concern that current activities such as chainsaw use or mountain bike use could continue until designation but would not be allowed after designation.
- The Liberty Bell area should have been chosen for potential wilderness – seems like there's lots of potential there.

Attachment 3: Flip Chart Notes

- Sierra Club would like to see more wilderness. There are more people so some areas are being over used.
- Were small potential areas not considered just because they are small?
- Wild and Scenic River designation is a concern – specifically scenic, because it would limit road use or construction (repairing roads that wash out).
- I have a concern about constructing log structures for fish habitat improvement. Will wild and scenic designation limit these opportunities?
- Why would we add more wilderness? Would the Forest Service not suppress wildfire in these recommended areas? This would be a concern.
- The state of Washington has enough wilderness already, although some boundary adjustments to make management easier may make sense.
- Mountain bikes on trails can make things dangerous for horseback riders.
- I have a concern about losing snowmobile access. Limits to off-road snowmobiling would limit opportunities.
- Be sure to designate areas for off-road snowmobiling. Areas closed to off-road snowmobiling with and open route designated through an area. Need an open area for snowmobiles along the route. Use this to make backcountry and snowmobiling areas both available in these popular areas.
- What is the motivation or driver behind recommending new wilderness? Hikers, horseback riders (specifically in the Coulter Creek area)? This area is popular with motorcycle riders.
- Using geographic features as wilderness boundaries makes sense, and makes it easier for the public to know if they are in or out of wilderness.
- Snowmobile use in wilderness is a problem.
- What about Lake Ethel? What would be proposed? In the Chiwaukum the whole area has been logged.

Vegetation

Q: Regarding merchantable wood products, the proposed action is tied to a 10 year trend vs. any potential growth. What is the harvest potential? Why limit harvest to that trend or range? Would that lock you in?

Attachment 3: Flip Chart Notes

R: We are not limited in the proposed action. We could go up or down based on the capacity or horsepower (resources, people, budget). The DEIS will show a range of alternatives. The OWNF could see a range of 130 to 200 MBF. The intent is to have old structure.

C: Needs to be cut to help reach the old growth stage.

R: We may treat old growth to retain.

C: I have a concern that the proposed action is not showing intent to do enough treatment to make a difference with 120,000 acres a year.

C: Proposed action doesn't have enough detail about management intent. The fire management plan is missing tools for prescribe fire and air resource management.

R: The revised forest plan has a desired condition to allow fire to play its natural role and includes planned fire.

Q: How do you explain to the public what level of activity you are proposing with that? What is the tie to developing a fire management plan? Policy changes and this needs to be addressed more.

R: There is a desire for fire to play its natural role, including use of natural and prescribed fire. Air quality and smoke management issues are challenges to fulfilling that desire. We are also communicating with the DNR and other state agencies that we coordinate with.

C: I hope to see more emphasis on the fire management plan and management intent. It's a big change for the OW. There is a hierarchy of disturbance cycles in different vegetation type.

C: I support the restoration project and the variety of tools to accomplish it. Need to describe the broad range of what can be done.

Q: Regarding forest health, what effect do the insect outbreaks have on the forest and how does the forest plan address those issues?

R: We need restoration. We need to encourage more of a mosaic on the landscape. Forest service efforts to stop fire have had an effect on the health and condition of stands.

Q: What about replanting?

Attachment 3: Flip Chart Notes

R: Western larch could be a possibility. There are also other more disease resistant species. Potential for climate change is taken into consideration in plan development. There is a desire to build resiliency into stands and ecosystems in general.

Q: What can you do?

R: We would like to work towards fewer trees per acre, with different types of trees that contain transition species. We would like to encourage ground vegetation that is more drought-tolerant. Need to build resilience into our ecosystems – soils, streams, habitats, vegetative systems – so they can respond to changes in climate.

C: I have a concern about old growth.

R: the desired future condition is to maintain or have old structure on the landscape.

C: I am interested in seeing more harvest.

R: The insect and disease situation appears to be affecting more landscape than fire. Post management practices and fire exclusion has had an effect. We'd like to do more restoration to build more resilience into the system. There would be a wider range of structure types. We propose to use a variety of tools, including harvest, to improve the structure.

C: I'm seeing a lot of trees dying in the Blewett Pass and other areas.

R: That is from insect infestation. Larch would be a good tree to encourage in this area. They are deciduous and native and are associated with wet spring conditions. They are able to rebound. We are trying to reduce scale of outbreaks by improving forest structure.

Q: Is there damage to trees and vegetation from snowmobiles? I am concerned about the scale of this impact on trees, particularly with low snow levels.

Q: What is happening to the white bark pines in the Teanaway and Mount Lillian areas?

Q: What is the impact of snowmobiles on subnivean species like bog lemmings? And compaction to vegetation in meadows such as Haney Meadows)?

R: I have a concern about snowmobile gas leaking into aquatic systems (two stroke unburned gas). There is a concentration of activity in certain areas so there must be gas and compaction impacts.

Attachment 3: Flip Chart Notes

Q: What level of damage and cost is there to young trees by snowmobiles? There are private timber companies that are closing their forests to snowmobiling because of damage. And there is research at Yellowstone regarding snowmobiling impacts to wildlife (esp. noise).

R: There are no restrictions regarding snow depth and use. The proxy is dates that are tied to seasonal road closures, etc.

C: Etienne Creek/Navaho area – the snowmobile route goes along the creek.

C: There are wildlife studies that say snowmobile compaction is occurring in more areas due to new capability of newer machines. May be affecting wildlife in a different way now.